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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: priority themes: social services for all

Letter dated 21 December 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the report of the International Expert Meeting on Social Services for All, which was held at Frankfurt, Germany, from 14 to 16 October 1998 (see annex).

The Expert Meeting was organized by the German Association for Public and Private Welfare and hosted by Germany as a European initiative to the regional follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. Thirty-nine experts from the 15 Member States of the European Union, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations Secretariat, who work in public authorities, non-governmental organizations, voluntary organizations or research and science, participated in their personal capacity.

The objective of the Expert Meeting was to provide the Commission for Social Development with a stimulating background document on the situation and possible future of social services in the European Union in order to enrich the global reflections on the issue and to serve as an example of transnational and regional analysis.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the thirty-seventh session of the Commission for Social Development under agenda item 3 (a) (i).

(*Signed*) Dieter **Kastrup**

* E/CN.5/1999/1.

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Annex

EXPERT MEETING

"SOCIAL SERVICES FOR ALL"

Frankfurt/Main 14-16 October 1998

REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE MEETING

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, Denmark in March 1995, was the first major United Nations conference specifically targeted on social development issues. The Summit brought together 117 heads of State of Government - the largest number of world leaders which ever met - to agree on a new global social contract which places people at the centre of development by making the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment and the furthering of stable, safe and just societies the overriding objectives of the international community.

The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development with its ten groundbreaking commitments and the Program of Action which outlines policies, actions and measures to implement the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration - both adopted by the 186 countries attending the Social Summit - intend to create, in a framework of sustained economic growth and sustainable development, a national and international environment favourable to social development, to eradicate poverty, to enhance productive employment and reduce unemployment, and to foster social integration.

While the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Copenhagen Program of Action lies primarily in the responsibility of each country, the United Nations institutions and specialised agencies are committed to providing support for such efforts. Particularly the UN Commission for Social Development has been mandated by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to deal with the follow-up to the Social Summit. Since 1996 the Commission for Social Development monitors progress made in the implementation of the Copenhagen agreements, the effectiveness of corresponding policies and strategies, as well as problems or obstacles encountered. It does so by receiving and appraising voluntarily submitted national reports from Governments and by executing, at its annual sessions, a multi-year programme of work for the consideration of priority subjects. Thus the Commission had the eradication of poverty on the agenda of its special session in 1996, it dealt with productive employment and sustainable livelihoods in 1997 and discussed in 1998 ways and means to promoting social integration and the participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

For the annual February session 1999 the priority theme of the Commission for Social Development has been defined as "Social Services for All" taking into account that most of the Copenhagen commitments require adequate, effective and efficient social services meeting basic human needs. In fact, the Program of Action of the World Summit for Social Development provides a general framework for the topic by recalling that 'The well-being of people ... requires the exercise of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, access to the provision of good education, health care and other basic public services, and the development of harmonious relations within communities. Social integration, or the capacity of people to live together with full respect for the dignity of each individual, the common good, pluralism and diversity, non-violence and solidarity, as well as their ability to participate in social, cultural, economic and political life, encompasses all aspects of social development and all policies. It requires the protection of the weak, as well as the right to differ, to create and to innovate. It calls for a sound economic environment, as well as for cultures based on freedom and responsibility. It also calls for the full involvement of both the State and civil society'.

In a world where a great number of people still do not have sufficient food, and even more suffer from malnutrition, where many people lack ready access to safe water supplies, where

unemployment and under-employment are on a high level, and growing in many countries, and where an increasing number of people suffer from absolute poverty - just to mention some of the basic socio-economic challenges - the provision of social services for all is crucial for the world-wide social development and maintenance of peace in the future.

According to the spirit of Copenhagen social services have to be considered under the guiding principles of universality, equal access, needs-based and client-oriented as well as responsive to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged or specific population groups. A number of main issues, which cut across sectors, like organisation, delivery, financing and evaluation are to be examined and recommendations made for further policies, strategies and action.

The development of social services for all is a strategic step for economic and social development in the world. The concept and definition of "social services", however, is different according to the political, economic, social and cultural context. It is therefore necessary to clarify the basic terms and the understanding of "social services ". The definition of social services by the UN is based on a broad concept. In the spirit of the UN World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, services relating to the following sectors should be included: education, health, food and nutrition, safe water, sanitation, and social welfare. Social services may be classified in three broad categories:

1. meeting essential needs of the entire population, relevant at all times (education and training, information, health, food, security, shelter, clean water, sanitation, personal safety and access to the law and legal protection),

2. appropriate to different stages in the life-cycle or life-span, e.g. infancy and childhood, adolescence and youth, economically active years, retirement, advanced old age,

3. services and support required by population groups with specific needs, e.g. disabled persons, indigenous people, migrants, low income large families, the destitute, offenders and delinquents, addicts, victims of crime or violence etc.

In social development matters Western European society constitutes an interesting case. After the progressive weakening and even breakdown of traditional forms of economic solidarity and social cohesion through the effects of the industrial revolution, the first modern social security system was conceived and introduced here in the late 19th century and, some decades later, the notion of the 'welfare state' became a guiding concept of most Western European countries. Social services provided by State and by voluntary organisations in various mixes have traditionally been considered as an essential element of the concept of the social State and have generally reached a high level in terms of coverage, specialisation, quality and effectiveness.

However, as Western European society changes rapidly these days as to its composition, 'ideologies' and priorities - partly due to new challenges like an ageing population, the globalisation of the economy, European integration and the information society - and as financial constraints set obvious limitations to generous planning, various and serious problems have to be resolved and new innovative responses to be developed in the area of social services.

Thus it seems legitimate and appropriate to share the experience of Western European society in the domain of social services - its strengths, its problems and its challenges - with other parts of the world in the framework of the next substantive debate of the Commission for Social Development in February 1999 on,"Social Services for All".

As Germany will assume the Presidency of the European Union at that time and consequently act as porte parole of the Union in the Commission for Social Development, the German Government has decided to sponsor a meeting of European experts on the issue of "Social Services for All in the European Union" to be organised by the German Association for Public and Private Welfare in Frankfurt in October 1998. Two experts from each of the 15 Member States of the European Union were invited strictly in their personal capacity and did not represent government opinion. They work in either public authorities - on national, regional or local- level, in voluntary organisations or in research and science.

The present report of the expert meeting in Frankfurt is designed to provide a stimulating background documentation on the situation and possible future of social services in the European Union to the Commission for Social Development in order to enrich the global reflections on the issue and to serve as an example of transnational, regional analysis.

It is evident that for the European Union the definition of social services has to be focused on services particularly relevant to the needs and social problems of European citizens. Social services as part of the wider context of social policy aim at social integration and social participation of people excluded from community life or at the peril of exclusion. It is obvious that specific needs are of higher priority in the European Union than others like, for example:

- poverty - defined by the European Union as meaning "persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State in which they live" (Commission of the EC, European File 4 / 87, Brussels 1987, page 3),
- unemployment - about 20 million people are officially unemployed, 8 million of them long-term unemployed,
- social exclusion of marginal groups and ethnic minorities,
- social disadvantages of various social groups like homeless people, refugees, disabled persons, etc.,
- lack on information on social rights and benefits,
- illiteracy,
- inadequate implementation of social rights.

In the 15 Member States of the European Union, social services are organised in different ways and carried out by various institutions. The State, non-profit organisations, for-profit organisations, volunteers as well as basic social institutions like family and kinship are delivering social services. Persons and groups benefiting from social services live in a large variety of situations: at home or in institutions, alone or in their families, relatively independent (e.g. young people) or totally dependent (heavily handicapped and severely ill persons), equipped with basic resources (e.g. home, income) or extreme poor (homeless and ill). The type of service ranges from a professional, hi-tech supported institutional care to just an informal help by a relative.

Even though social services in the various Member States of the European Union are somewhat differently conceived and organised, there is a common understanding that we mean personal social services excluding general (public) services like clean water etc., education, social security systems, the health care system and other general provisions.

2. CHALLENGES TO SOCIAL SERVICES

Despite a tremendous growth of economic development and social security during the last decades, disparities in levels of social development and wealth have grown. Until now the social systems in Western European countries have proved their strength by providing social services and social security adequate to most economic risks which citizens may encounter. The social development of Europe as an integrated part of European integration plays an essential role to safeguard the success of economic integration and political stability. The following challenges affecting the state, non-profit organisations, for-profit organisations, volunteers as well as basic social institutions like family and kinship have been identified as issues of topical relevance across EU Member States by the participants of the European Expert Meeting.

Migration

Migration within and into the European Union seems to be one of those urgent challenges affecting social services to a considerable extent. Migration or mobility may lead to a migration of poverty. In addition, people of different ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds define a different demand with regard to the performance and quality of social services, and express new and different needs from different cultural perspectives.

These developments have several consequences. The number of people in need of social services is increasing while at the same time those contributing to the financing of social services are decreasing and budgets are cut down. At the same time social services are confronted with different needs due to the cultural background of the migrants. Staff and social workers are not adequately prepared to answer the specific needs of new target groups. Both staff and migrants often lack language skills and intercultural competencies. Furthermore, the recruiting of staff does not reflect changing multicultural societies.

Although the need to adapt social services to changing users' expectations has clearly been identified it is stressed that offering social services, especially for certain target groups, bears the risk of marginalisation and segregation, especially in those European countries which show a rather homogenous cultural background of the population.

As the migration across European countries becomes easier and more frequent, there will be a need to break down complex administrative and bureaucratic barriers in order to guarantee equal access to social services.

Financial Resources

The financial constraints of public budgets will create a growing pressure to achieve reduction of costs of social transfers and services. An important increase of impact and efficiency of social services will be expected. One of the reasons for this discussion are demographic changes such as the ageing of population (see below). In most Member States the input-output relation, the balance of costs and benefits with regard to social services, is one of the main identified challenges. Economising or commercialising social services are consequences which will be dealt with in the next section of this report.

Competition

In the context of the growing predominance of the market economy ideology, social services are increasingly considered as being similar to other economic services. Commercialising social services - as a means to meet financial constraints and in order to create more economic and financial

responsibility - can result in greater competition among social services providers. Detailed responses to this pressure to commercialise European social services are discussed in some detail in the next section of the report.

Co-operation

Despite increasing competition among social services providers the necessity to co-operate rises at the same time. In some Member States (eg. Austria) there is even the legal requirement to network. Co-operation can help providers to save resources of staff, time, knowledge, money, technical means etc. From the users point of view co-operation can mean improving the quality of social services through the adoption of more holistic approaches, and innovations such as the use of 'one-stop-shops'. The challenge to suppliers of social services is to demonstrate both a commitment and competence to build strategic alliances and networks.

Job Creation

Social services and the third sector are increasingly concerned with the subject of fighting unemployment. A high priority of the European Union's social policy is to create employment opportunities for marginalised groups in particular. This is evident in the aims and criteria of many of their newer social programmes. There is a growing focus on the links between social services and other public and non-governmental organisations concerned with employment. It is expected that this development will create many new jobs as many municipalities put greater emphasis on job creation in the field of social services.

Empowerment of the Individual

A new paradigm in social policy arises which shifts from the traditional concept of the welfare state to a concept of more individual responsibility. Empowerment of the individual is definitely one of the major challenges which social services are facing. Interestingly, this emphasis on the responsibility and empowerment of the individual comes not just from a more conservative political ideology, but also from a grass roots, libertarian interest. Demanding more from the individual is completely in accordance with an individualistic society, but there is a risk that such a development may foster egoism and neglect solidarity among people.

Unemployment

The challenge to social services to create employment has been referred to above. A high level of unemployment, particularly long-term unemployment, has major negative effects on the basis of the welfare state (eg. financing social security systems, increasing costs for social provision). The widespread reality fact that increasing numbers of people are living on social benefit is undoubtedly one of the major challenges most European countries face. While the work force - those contributing to the social security system - decreases, the number of people requiring social services increases. High unemployment and under-employment undermine social cohesion and weaken social stability, resulting in economic, social and psychic deprivation.

Demographic and Social Changes

The ageing of European populations is regarded as of great importance with regard to both quantitative and qualitative aspects of social services. This topic is referred to below. Another challenge within the context of demographic and social changes is the substantial change in the structures of households (family structures) across the European Union. Due to factors such as changing life models and divorce there are considerably more lone-parent-families. They have

specific needs which social services have to meet, including childcare facilities, financial needs, suitable employment for single mothers especially, and adequate social benefits.

Participants at the Frankfurt meeting noted that as there are higher numbers of women entering the workforce, their availability as a resource for volunteers is decreasing. The increasing level of employment of women outside the home also affects the family as a basic social institution, with major implications for childcare and care for elderly relatives.

Ageing Populations

The ageing of European societies will result in the relation between active and non-active persons changing from 4:1 in 1996 to 3:1 in 2020. Furthermore, the percentage of people older than 75 years among elderly persons will grow from today 40% to 47% by the end of 2010. These dramatic demographic changes will create a much greater demand for social services. In addition, the ageing of the population is changing the systems of long-term care to a great extent. A major concern now in all countries is how can long-term care for elderly people be provided and financed. This subject is discussed in some detail in the next section of the report.

New Values

New values, in particular among the younger generations in Europe, challenge existing structures and regulations in the social sector. People want more participation and power regarding the scope and quality of social services, paternalistic systems being less accepted now by service users and their families. This movement has considerable implications for the way we conceptualise and organise social services. This is considered further later in the report.

3. COUNTRIES' RESPONSES TO THE CHALLENGES FACING SOCIAL SERVICES

Participants at the Expert Meeting identified several broad policy directions adopted by many European countries to counter the principal challenges to social services discussed in the previous section. These responses are mainly designed to introduce **innovations in services**, often with a cost-effective emphasis; to **reduce costs**; and to **modernise social services**. Of course, there are variations in responses adopted by individual countries, depending on factors such as their social, economic and social situations. The picture is that all European countries face similar challenges in the field of social services but each country has its own unique starting point, history and development of social services.

The main policy and service responses discussed by participants are now considered in outline. Some further details are found in section 5 of this report which deals with substantive topics.

The Future of Welfare Debate

The context for understanding responses to challenges for social services is the intense concern and debate in Europe and other parts of the world over 'the future of welfare'. This debate goes back to the 1970s when the first oil crisis raised serious problems for countries' ability to continue high levels of public expenditure. Subsequent periods of economic recession (eg. the current one); the impact of increasing economic globalisation with its pressure to reduce production costs; and a tendency towards greater conservatism in politics have all raised fundamental questions for welfare and how it should be paid for.

This debate over welfare concerns not only the future for social services but all aspects of social insurance and social assistance payments. Interestingly, public opinion surveys show that there remains a high level of citizen support for well funded, quality public welfare services - but less support for relatively high levels of taxation to pay for them. For both economic and political reasons governments in Europe are looking for ways of reducing their direct spending on welfare of all kinds and transferring costs elsewhere eg. private rather than state retirement pensions.

The Development of 'Mixed Economies of Social Services'

The implications of this widespread re-think on welfare for social services are considerable. Participants explained how
their countries are, in various ways, now developing mixed economies of social services. The main aim is reduce the responsibility of governments at all levels for both financing and directly providing social services. Families, non-governmental groups and organisations, and commercial social services agencies are encouraged to take on a much greater role in social service provision and financing.

To varying degrees these three sectors have always made significant contributions to social care and support - especially families - but this will be even more pronounced in the future. Elsewhere in this report we refer to some of the specific aspects of this shift to mixed economies of social services eg. new emphasis on the role of the state/public authorities as enablers rather than providers; transfer of costs to service users through increased charges. This reduction in financing and provision by the state is most noticeable in countries like Sweden and Denmark with their tradition of high taxation and comprehensive state social services. Other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands have always had a very mixed provider system but with the state responsible for financing a high proportion of the costs of services provided by non-governmental organisations.

Universal versus Selective Services, and Targeting

As a central part of this widespread re-think on welfare previous principles of universal services for all by right are under review. The argument is that universal services for all (eg. child allowances regardless of parental income) are simply too expensive for heavily constrained government budgets. Instead, limited public funds for welfare, including social services, should be targeted on people in greatest need. This change requires the use of means-testing, a system which research evidence demonstrates has the effect of deterring many people in need from applying for both cash and social service assistance.

In social services this shift to targeting services is seen particularly in residential and home-based services for elderly people. In the previous section of the report we considered the serious implications for social services of ageing populations in Europe. Residential care is particularly expensive so that governments are experimenting with new ways of maintaining elderly people in their own homes through community care policies, as well as concentrating all forms of social care provision on elderly people assessed as most in need - and unable to pay for services themselves. It is in care of elderly people that we see the greatest increase in commercial provision in many European countries as more and more people have to pay for services received.

Introduction of Economic and Commercial Concepts and Methods in Social Services

There is a clear tendency in our countries for social services to become more 'business like'. The language of social workers and other personnel is changing as they become familiar with terms such as 'cost effectiveness', 'performance indicators', 'value for money' and 'contracting'. A central aim of what is in effect a major cultural change in social services is to introduce methods from business to

ensure that public organisations especially make the most efficient and effective use of their limited budgets. It is argued that traditionally these agencies and their staff have had too little understanding and concern for budgets and costs, a tradition that must change quickly in this era of increasing demand and limited resources for social services.

In some countries substantial research is conducted into more cost effective ways of providing services. For example, a major study in the UK into cost effective ways of keeping dependent elderly people in their own homes demonstrated that by giving specially trained social workers budgets for home-based services, these people could be kept out of expensive residential care for significant periods. This approach is cost effective in that care costs were reduced and the elderly people concerned enjoyed a better quality of life than similar elderly people admitted to residential care. This study has had a major impact on British community care policy, legislation and practice.

Based partly on American experience and projects such as the one above, some European countries (eg. France, the Netherlands, UK) have introduced **case or care management** approaches to service provision. This is particularly so in services for older and disabled people but more recently care management is used in certain services for children and families. A care manager is usually, but not always, a social worker who assesses the needs of a user, designs a package of care service based on those needs, and then manages the implementation of the services. The care manager her/himself may not provide a direct regular service
to the user, a rather different role from traditional social work casework or counselling.

Care managers normally work within explicit budgets, with social services resources targeted on users with greatest needs. Following the initial assessment some people may be refused service by the public social services agency because either their needs are not great enough, or their income is sufficient for them to purchase services elsewhere.

Contracting is another example of this introduction of economic and business activities into social services. It is very extensively developed in the USA where public welfare agencies contract with many not-for-profit and for-profit providers, but contracting is less well known in many European countries. That is changing, more so in some countries than others. In developing mixed economies of social services public agencies and their staff are moving from traditions of giving annual grants to NGOs to the much more business orientated system of setting up formal contracts, with tightly drawn service specifications in return for sometimes very substantial contracts.

This shift to contracting by public agencies has considerable implications for the training of their staff, and raises some concerns. Certainly social work training has given very little attention to business methods, so that existing staff require new training in these methods. As section 5 of this report shows in the discussion of **Quality**, there is a concern that in the drive to reduce costs through competition and contracting there will be less control over service quality. Vulnerable service users, such as elderly people and people with learning difficulties, may suffer as a result.

The introduction of **markets and competition** in social services is yet another example of the introduction of economic and business methods into social services. Discussion at the Frankfurt meeting showed that this innovation is more evident in some countries than others. Participants had reservations over the extent to which markets and competition could properly be introduced into social services. The dangers to service quality of contracts based on systems of competitive tendering have already been mentioned. The research literature refers to 'quasi-markets' in social services, suggesting a half-way approach to encouraging competition and the creation of markets in this field. In other words, markets and competition should be carefully controlled to achieve an acceptable balance of cost reduction and maintenance of well defined and assured service standards.

In conclusion to this section, participants expressed a general note of caution over too great an enthusiasm for the wholesale importation of the concepts and practices from business and commerce into the social services field. As has been demonstrated in the cost effectiveness example in community care, properly conducted innovations can produce positive results for budget constrained public organisations, and for their service users. This is a good model for how we should proceed in what is still a relatively uncertain and rather controversial area of social services.

Prevention and Developing the Care Capacities of Communities

Eventually most discussions of the future of social services will turn to the subject of the importance of prevention, and this was so at the Frankfurt meeting. Prevention was considered in two aspects: preventing the development of social and personal problems that social services have to respond to; and prevention in the sense that communities and individuals can be helped to deal with many of their own needs and problems, without having to turn to social services agencies.

Of course, we all agree that prevention in both senses is 'a good thing'. The difficulty is that we are much less certain what prevention means in actual practice, what is to be done by whom to prevent which problems developing, and what evidence there is that certain policies and practices do directly prevent problems from developing. Evidence for the effectiveness of prevention programmes is quite difficult to obtain.

However, in their public and non-governmental social services most countries adopt some variation of a community development approach as part of a prevention strategy. Social workers/community development workers are employed not to work directly with individual users but instead to assist the development of a variety of self-help or community action groups. France particularly has a long history of this style of work. The encouragement of volunteering is an example of work by social services to develop the capacity of local communities to meet local needs without depending on (expensive) public services.

4. SUBSTANTIVE SUBJECTS

a) The role of the state and other actors in the field of social services

The historical roots of social services are twofold: partly citizens initiated social services themselves (voluntary groups, self-help groups), partly the state has started with the provision of social services. The establishment of a developed system of social services is an achievement of the modern welfare state. Therefore, to meet the new challenges emerging from the social development the state should take over an active role in ensuring and improving social services.

The ways how the state can fulfil this task may be different. However, it seems to be evident that the state should:

- Create and ensure a legal framework enabling the social services to achieve their goals
- Guarantee equal access for all social groups and throughout the country
- Guarantee social rights and minimum standards
- Ensure an adequate financing of social services,
- Organise that quality of social services is given and developed, e g. by a minimum qualification standard of staff, and
- Set up and organise rules for competition and the social market.

These tasks could be carried out at different levels of the state: national, regional and local. A more decentralised system allows more flexibility and adaptation to local and regional needs. The forms of decentralisation can be different, but the responsibilities should be clearly assigned to the different levels and not be fragmented.

There is, however, a strong notion of the fact that the state should not create and implement the whole range of social services. The European welfare state always relied upon an active citizenship and a major role for non-governmental organisations. In some European countries the non-governmental organisations even play a major rule in providing social services. In addition, voluntary groups form an important part of the system of social services.

It is obvious that non-governmental organisations and voluntary groups are indispensable for modern social services. In the future, they will become more important in this field. This is not only due to the public financial constraints but also to the fact that only an active and participating role of citizens and their organisations can ensure social services of high quality and great effectiveness. The principle of **subsidiarity** as a part of European culture means in this context that self-help and self-organisation by citizens is prior to state intervention: a democratic society requires active and participating citizens, and the term "civil society" expresses the wish that the state should not dominate people's lives as it did in communist European countries some time ago.

In European countries different models of the roles of state, non-governmental organisations and voluntary groups can be found. This diversity is due to cultural traditions and mentalities of people and should be kept in the future. Harmonisation of the structures is not only unachievable but also not effective. There is, however, a need for convergence of structures by striving for common European goals like empowering the citizens / users and making social services more efficient and effective.

During the past years, the commercial organisations became a more important role in the sector of social services. Sometimes it is feared that for-profit organisations would take the pick of the bunch and neglect non-profitable fields of social services. It has also be pointed out that for-profit organisations may only be accessible for rich people. Negative side effects of the inclusion of for-profit organisations can be avoided if the state regulates the market.

The diversity among the providers of social services can be regarded as a great advantage. In order to create more responsibility among providers and to ensure the free choice of the user, the state should arrange a sufficient competition among providers of social services.

b) Users in Social Services

Participation of citizens as users of social services is a high priority in the field of social development. Looking back over the development of social services, citizens asking for assistance with their various personal and social needs were treated more or less as 'objects' of social services. They were traditionally considered as passive 'clients' of the services. They may have actually received the service they really needed, sometimes the agency staff (eg. social workers) provided help which they considered to be good for the `client', or she/he was sent elsewhere because the person in need was not able to conform themselves to the internal rules of the service.

In this all too familiar situation it was overlooked that the client was not an object of social work but someone with a personal dignity as a human being. As such, she/he had a right of access to the service, and also a social right of participation in an active way as an individual in need.

Democratic societies have increasingly acknowledged the new role of the individual as no longer a dependent client but as a personality being competent to express her/his needs, able to discuss the measures and assistance offered to her/him. Furthermore, the person asking for help is to be seen as a competent user or customer of the social service.

Despite this more modern view of the user of social services, the participants at the Frankfurt meeting identified many barriers to the access of and participation in social services. The lack of information for users is a significant barrier, as are the stigmatisation and discrimination of certain groups of users, language and culture, and not least the financial contributions asked of the users of services.

These barriers pointed out may be overcome by new ways of providing information about services, the rights and duties of users, the processes involved in applying for and securing services, and the likely outcomes of services. This information should be distributed in all places regularly, in appropriate languages, and according to the culture and custumes of the potential users. To reduce the fear of entering a service, the first steps to gaining access to services may be sport events or cultural and popular events.

Good experience has been made in France with so-called 'welcome meetings' outside the service units, in railway stations or even pubs. Other examples were TV spots, so-called reality shows with professionals, volunteers and users, and advertisements on television, radio and in newspapers. A telephone services is also used to give information and provide consultation concerning concrete demand of users who are not able or willing to ask directly for personal assistance. The telephone service has proved particularly useful for children and minors with family difficulties.

To reduce and even eliminate linguistic and cultural barriers it is important to have personnel familiar with languages of different ethnic groups and preferably from the same cultural background as the potential users. Staff must be trained to work sensitively and effectively with discriminated and stigmatized, as well as engaging in community relations work in their areas, bringing together the population of the locality and discriminated or stigmatized groups of users.

To avoid users with urgent needs not claiming social services because they cannot pay the financial contribution asked for by the services, there should be minimum standards and mechanisms within the service to cover the costs and to minimize the users' contributions. Sometimes it is possible to raise funds or to obtain personal sponsorships to ensure that the most economically insecure service users are not denied services which they need.

Although participation of users, together with fostering self-help and autonomous action of people is acknowledged as a goal of high priority in European societies, political parties, unions and other important associations too often practice patronage and clientalism. These phenomena cause increasing dependence of users and weakens their capacity for real participation.

To avoid phenomena such as clientism and patronage, the democratisation of services would strengthen the position of social services users. This can be achieved through greater

transparency in the structures and processes of the services. The ambitious goal is to enhance social citizenship through the greater integration of the user into society.

The growth of social problems in the industrialized countries as a consequence of factors such as changing values and living conditions has tended to lead to a dissipation and over specialisation of social services, to the disadvantage of many service users. Information about the different types of services is helpful but the concentration of services in so-called 'one stock shops' is a better way to assure adequate help. Another possibility, as practised in France, is to install a coordinator, fostering cooperation between the specialist services. Another obvious remedy to problems of fragmentation and over specialisation is increased and effective networking between the services.

Community work can play an important role in strengthening the competence of users as partners with management and agency staff, in delivering services, for communication, and acting in other ways within the democratic bodies of the service units. Mediators help users who are not able to express their demands and needs, as well as explaining or translating problems to the service and vice versa. Some experts disagreed with this opinion. They considered that users may be left in their dependent role and not helped to become independent from social services support.

The implications for the role of users of the introduction of markets in social services are as yet uncertain. Participation in commercial for-profit services is not possible if legislation does not impose democratic rights to the users, as seen in regulations for institutional services in the German Home Act. This law prescribes there must be an advisory council of residents in institutions, the council having certain advisory rights. These rights of participation are supervised in a limited way by the public administration.

The new forms of profit oriented services may create an unfortunate system that disadvantages users of these services. Users of commercial services may have far less opportunity to influence the planning, decision-making and delivery of services in a direct democratic way, compared with users with access democratic structured services. These consequences should be taken in mind in the debate on the privatisation and commercialisation of social services.

c) Staff, labour market, training, and volunteers

Social services are marked by an interaction between persons, the employee of the service provider and the user or citizen. Social services do not create products which can be stored; the value and the quality of the service is very much related to the providing person. Even from a financial point of view, usually 60-80 % of the costs of social services are costs of personnel. Therefore, the disposal of sufficient and well-qualified personnel has a strategic role in the development of social services. Moreover, the conditions of work and the organisational framework are key factors for the provision of services.

In addition, non-professionals form an important part of the social service sector. Voluntary work in social services has a great tradition and constitutes in some fields and some countries or regions of Europe the corner pillar of social services. Volunteers have, despite their lack of professionalism, the advantage of dealing with the client as a whole in his/her natural social context. Sometimes they are very helpful for a better understanding of the citizen's needs and can build bridges between the user and highly professionalised social services.

The relationship between professional workers and volunteers in the social sector is an important issue in most of the European countries. An insufficient clarification of the roles of each, the professional and the volunteer, can affect a good co-operation between them. In addition, the increase of voluntary work sometimes creates the fear that working places for professional workers could be reduced.

Employees in the sector of social services form an important part of the labour market. Although there are still high unemployment rates in Europe, a shortage of employees in the labour market is expected post- 2010. In some countries, there is mounting evidence of a shortage of qualified staff in social services. It was recognised that more women participate in the labour force, obtain better qualifications, are paid less, and are available for underpaid jobs in the service sector. Young people tend to look for jobs in other fields than the social sector. Furthermore, some fields of growing importance in social services like those for elderly persons seem to be less attractive for young people than others.

An indication also may be that the recruitment of volunteers for social services is becoming more difficult in some countries. The reasons for this phenomenon are not quite clear. Some argue that the diminished interest is due to more stressful working conditions of younger people than in the past, while others think that social services should make themselves more attractive for young people.

It has been noticed that employees of social services increasingly suffer from frustration and lack of motivation. This could be caused by various factors: insufficient remuneration, lack of training, non-democratic organisation of the service, bad working conditions etc. It is evident that an increasing diversity of users and their growing demands require better trained social workers.

But there is not only a need for better training of staff. Effective management and internal organisation structures which enable the employee to take over more responsibility can help to achieve more motivated and a better performing personnel. New ways of working like multi-disciplinary teams could support more satisfaction among the employees and a better quality of the service. The experiences and know-how of personnel management carried out in other service sectors of the economy should be used for social services. It is quite clear that employees of social services not only need an effective management but also good leadership. Working with people and for people requires social values and social visions.

The modernisation of personnel management includes the guarantee of equal opportunities for women. Furthermore, it is important to include staff from ethnic minorities, since there is a high proportion of people from minorities among the users of social services in may countries.

d) The Gender Issue

Looking at social services from a gender perspective, several aspects are closely linked to women. Financial constraints and structural changes within social services will have a much greater effect on women than on men. It is especially women who need social services. An increasing number of lone-parent-families (mainly single mothers) live on social benefit. Poverty among elderly people in most cases is poverty among women. Women are much more dependent on social security systems because of their unemployment, under-

employment, or being on low paid jobs.

The second gender aspect within the context of social services is the tradition of women bearing the main burden of unpaid social services. Changes of the role of women in our societies has a major consequence for the informal network of social services. As has been stated before as more women join the labour market the informal network of social care is collapsing eg. women as volunteers decline in numbers. Public and private service organisations have to find new ways of meeting the demand for social care which is less and less met by women.

Also, social services can be described as a traditionally female dominated (segregated) labour market. Jobs in the field of social services are highly attractive to women. One reason is that it offers part-time work in order to combine work and family life. But a disadvantage for women is that these jobs are often low paid.

Due to demographic changes mentioned earlier, most European countries face an increasing demand for social services. That is why this sector is expected to provide enhanced job opportunities in the future. In this context it is important to set certain standards of vocational skills and competencies required to ensure a high level of service performance. Training and qualification programmes must ensure equal participation of women.

e) Finance

The reduction of costs is not an end in itself although it may be necessary. The effects cutting public expenditure may even create more indirect economic costs for society as a whole. The final goal is to achieve a system of flexible, citizen-oriented, equally accessible social services of high quality which supports a democratic and socially balanced society.

Public financial constraints have led to various approaches to reducing social services costs financed by public authorities. Lump-sum financing combined with greater freedom to use public money flexibly, plus combining different sources of finance are examples of ways of using public money more effectively. Furthermore, modern management of costs and greater transparency in the use of resources can help to reduce expenses without cutting services. Making costs and prices of social services more transparent and comparable among the different providers will promote competition for better service and lower costs. Self-evidently, costs of services only can be assessed if the quality of the services is taken into account ie."value for money".

Creating personal budgets for users ie. "direct payments" can be regarded as a means of making better use of financial resources by giving more responsibility to the user. It gives the user more freedom of choice and may be a more effective way of meeting their needs, but it may also help to reduce costs of administration and control. The first practical experiments with "personal budgets", eg. for handicapped people, indicate that this method should be used more often.

More generally, reduction of costs can be achieved by preventing the emergence of need for social services. Independent life is the most appreciated goal among people and can also avoid unnecessary costs for social services. The state and insurance associations bearing the costs of services should develop more incentives to prevent the need for help. Even more, helping the users to achieve an independent life through social services

should be supported by incentives / sanctions for service providers. The final aim is not to optimise and to enlarge a system of social services but to keep people independent and self-sufficient in their lives.

f) Quality Issues in Social Services

The subject of quality has become prominent in European social services only quite recently. As a generalisation, a traditional view in social work and their employing agencies was that 'we know best' and the client was not in a position to know or pass an opinion about the quality of a service. This more recent concern for quality in social work and social services is part of a more fundamental movement to assert the rights of customers and service users in many fields, and to question the old view that professionals and their agencies will naturally do the right thing for us. Perhaps the worst example of the almost complete absence of any customer or user orientation was in the workings of most services in former communist countries.

As participants at the Frankfurt meeting agreed, the use of terms and methods such as 'quality management', 'quality control' and 'quality assurance' is another example of social services being dependent on developments in industry and commerce. It was acknowledged that social services are feeling their way with the introduction of quality measures and methods, and need to be wary of adopting inappropriate methods from other sectors.

Concerning quality, the social services user is in a different and more difficult position from the purchaser of goods in the high street. The latter has her or his own view of quality and makes a purchase accordingly. If quality proves to be unacceptable she/he may return the good and complain or purchase a similar item from an alternative shop next time. This is the supermarket model. The sophisticated customer may also consult independent evaluations of the quality of goods before making a purchase.

The position of the social services user is different. She/he frequently is not paying directly for the service, is uncertain about acceptable standards of quality, and may have very little if any choice between alternative suppliers of a service. Therefore, the social services user tends to be very dependent on third parties to define and ensure quality standards in services. In our discussions the following developments and issues were referred to:

1. Quality was defined as 'fitness for purpose'. It is not necessary to have a Rolex watch to know the time, a Timex watch serves the same purpose. Nor is it necessary to include caviar in a meals-on-wheels lunch.

2. Quality may be defined in relation to both process and output. The former is concerned with procedures and methods in a production process, the latter with the finished product. Social services are familiar with the ISO 9000, a set of international generic standards for quality. Under the ISO 9000 approach an organisation applies for registration for its quality processes and systems. To varying degrees social services agencies in Europe are establishing systems for ensuring quality eg. closer specification of standards, tighter requirements on staffing levels and qualifications of personnel.

3. A problem with ISO 9000 and systems being established in public services is that they become excessively bureaucratic. Staff have to complete endless forms with little awareness of the real purpose of doing so. The danger is that establishing quality procedures becomes a defensive activity, it is required and is done to avoid a possible penalty. This is becoming a real problem in a range of public services, including social

services.

4. Of course the social services user should be the best judge of quality output. Therefore, more attention is now given to surveys of user satisfaction. What matters then is what actions are taken following the results. As indicated above, unlike the supermarket shopper the social services user is rarely able to assess quality by comparing like services provided by different suppliers. This is a serious disadvantage. So she/he remains rather dependent on the professionals defining and assuring quality for her/him.

5. Professionals and those responsible for social services use two main ways to establish and check on service quality. Professionals traditionally do this through peer reviews by colleagues. Professional associations establish standards and ethics designed to ensure acceptable quality for users of their services. Individuals working at an unacceptable level of service quality standard may be disciplined. However, it was acknowledged at Frankfurt that welfare professions have weaker peer review systems than is the case, for example, in medicine.

6. Systems of inspection have traditionally been used in most public services to check on service standards. In social services there may be a central government inspection system, staffed by personnel who previously worked in social services agencies. In the UK the inspectors have considerable powers to require improvements in all aspects of local authorities' service standards. Inspection is seen as particularly important in the emerging systems of mixed economies of social services where services are increasing contracted out to external suppliers. Inspection as a tool to assure proper quality is only as good as the resources put into it and its powers to require improvements when quality is unacceptable.

Participants were informed that the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions will soon start on a multi-country study of quality in social welfare, as it applies both to service users and to social services staff.

Finally on the subject of quality, there is the question of cost implications. Even if we accept the earlier view that you do not need to include caviar with meals-on-wheels, there is often an increased cost consequence to taking quality seriously in social services. This may range from the substantial cost of ensuring that staff are properly trained to provide service of sufficient standard, to the cost of physical adaptations to a disabled person's home to enable him/her to continue to live there.

Question - to what extent can improvements in social service standards and quality be afforded during a prolonged period of heavy constraints on social service expenditure?

g) Equal Access to Services

Migration has been identified as a significant challenge affecting social services in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Suppliers of social services rarely reflect the growing number of ethnic groups in their staff recruitment, nor are service providers sufficiently prepared to answer the specific needs of people from different ethnic origins.

An essential element of the European political culture is the emphasis on universal access to social rights. In a legal and democratic state equal access to social services is mainly supported by defined social rights. Apart from the legal question, a number of factors create

inadequate coverage or lack of access to social services. Some of these factors are:

1. financial barriers (eg. fees or charges which discourage people from applying for services)

2. lack of information about what is available and the criteria of eligibility

3. physical barriers (eg. concerning people with disabilities, remoteness or isolation of services, inadequate transport facilities)

4. social barriers (eg. language problems, discrimination, stigmatisation)

5. bureaucratic barriers (eg. complexity of administration)

6. selective treatment or 'creaming'

7. insufficient development of civil society organisations such as advocates or 'watchdogs'

8. endogenous factors (eg. illiteracy, prejudice, fear of dealing with authority)

9. institutional barriers (eg. lack of knowledge, skills and competencies; inadequate conditions such as opening hours)

10. differences in income which influence the quality of service which is or can be chosen.

h) Organisation, management and efficiency of Social Services

Organisations providing social services are very different as to size, scope, legal status etc. The diversity derives from national culture, tradition and from differences in the types of service. The demands on social services are likewise different. Institutional and non-institutional care, services for small or for large target groups, the degree of dependence of public financing, and the nature of the social problem to be tackled are examples of different requirements for the organisation and management of services.

There are, however, common challenges for social services in a rapidly changing social and economical environment. As the labour market for social services cannot be separated from the general labour market, social services are in competition with other parts of society in this regard. To recruit and to keep qualified and suitable personnel, working conditions, remuneration, and career opportunities must all be competitive within the general labour market. In addition, the increasing expectations of users and the pressure caused by public financial constraints create much higher demands on the organisation and management of social services.

The internal structure and culture of service organisations should allow a great flexibility, a high standard of service culture, high performance and efficiency. Democratic and flexible structures, including considerable responsibility for employees, will be better able to meet the new demands than traditional hierarchical institutions. This is true for commercial and non-profit organisations as well as for public institutions.

Furthermore, new demands will arise from modern information technologies. They will change the way of working inside the service organisation and affect the relationship between service provider and user as well. New information technology can both replace

employees and create new job opportunities. Services can be provided faster and more efficiently by accelerating and improving communication. This can be achieved through users having access to information through the internet, and services can obtain more data about the needs and wishes of users by using new technologies. If, for example, home carers provide data about their work and the needs of clients each day to a service centre, the quality of services can be adapted to the users more rapidly and exactly. There is no doubt that the use of modern technologies can help services to be more flexible and orientated to the needs of users.

There is still a gap between the requirements of transparency of costs and the availability of data about social services. Adequate bookkeeping systems and use of computers to establish an effective controlling process is not self-evident for social services. It is vital for the efficient management of social services to use modern means of cost-controlling and assessing the real outcome of services. Furthermore, public institutions (public authorities, social insurance organisations) financing social services should establish a framework of competition among service providers which allows them to make the outcome and the resources used for a service both transparent and comparable. Although the definition of indicators of performance may be more difficult for social services than for private industry products, a clear concept and measurement of outcome of social services is indispensable.

Regarding efficiency and effectiveness of social services, there is no general rule as to the size and the legal status of service providers. Large organisations may have more resources to enable them to use effective management tools and new technologies, but they are frequently less flexible and less prepared for a rapid change of structures than are small organisations. Public services providers are often seen as less flexible and changeable than private non-profit or for profit organisations. They can, however, quickly catch up if they have to compete with other providers, private or public.

In a pluralistic and manifold society marked by an overwhelming flood of information, it is necessary for service providers to make full use of modern public relationship and marketing methods, regardless of whether the service organisations are public or private. Public social service organisations have to present themselves and advertise in relation to users but also to financial institutions and the general public. The information society requires a highly active approach with regard to the media and the general public.

5 CONCLUSIONS

i) New Approach to Social Services

The traditional perception of social services refers to a model of society where one part of society, in particular the economic sector, produces the wealth whereas the other parts distribute and consume it. Social services seem to be non-productive in an economic sense - they obtain their legitimacy from ethical or moral principles of a human society. The needy part of population relies upon the productive or well-off part of the society. If the economy does not flourish and public finances are limited, social services seem to become a luxury which cost society resources without contributing to economic wealth. This model expresses a type of separation of social services from the rest of society - with their own rules, their unique structure and own mentality.

In fact, western industrialised societies have changed considerably over the past decades.

The risk to become dependent on social services is not restricted to a specific social group like - for instance - the working class. Despite a tremendous increase of standards of living social disparities in society did not disappear but even increase. There has been a major change of social structures: smaller families, a greater diversity of forms of living together (eg. single parent families, households of singles), an increasing urbanisation and mobility of people, a greater life expectancy etc. Social services are no longer exclusive for poor people or a few extreme life situations but a "normal" means to manage daily life. It is a long time ago that the family or - in a few cases - the church or a charity organisation covered the social needs of people. In modern society, social services are characterised by:

- self-confident users or customers of services rather than recipients of alms high professional and specialised social workers/staff
- legally guaranteed social rights of the needy
- well-organised service providers operating according to modern standards of management
- efficient and effective methods of providing services with high quality standards
- flexible, plural, user-oriented services marked by a great variety

In European countries, the social service sector has become of equal rank with other parts of society. It is much interrelated with other sectors and likewise affected by rationalisation, professionalism, use of modern technologies, developed division of work etc. Furthermore, social services are becoming more important for the development of society as whole since they spend a major part of public expenditure and employ a great number of employees.

The development from the traditional model towards a modern model of social services is underway. In some European countries it is far more advanced than in others, in particular the southern member states. Nevertheless, the new role of social services will require a change of the relations between the user, the service providers as well as the state. Although it is difficult to define the new roles it is clear that traditional relations between the clients, public authorities and service providers will change.

ii) Evaluating Outcomes of Social Services

Participants at the meeting referred to the increasing emphasis on evaluation of outcomes of social services in their countries. Naturally, this is more evident in some countries than others. How is this to be explained and is it a positive development?

Much social work intervention and social services provision can be understood as a process of inputs - outputs - outcomes. A home help regularly goes to an elderly housebound person to clean, shop and cook. Those activities are service inputs. The house is therefore kept clean, food is bought and meals cooked - all outputs. So far the service process is relatively easy to record and quantify. The results of the service inputs and outputs may be that the user remains healthy because of regular and nutritious meals, and her psychological health is maintained at a good level because of the combined effects of the home help service. These are important but quite difficult to measure outcomes of the service.

Satisfactory evaluations and studies of outputs in social services can be difficult to conduct for methodological reasons. For example, it is not always possible to show a clear causal link

between service inputs and outputs, and results or outcomes for the user. Nevertheless, such studies are important and increasingly required for at least two strong reasons.

First, because of a European wide movement to become more user orientated in social services we require a greater concern for the effectiveness of our services. We have to know much more about what services produce which outcomes for whom, how, and what implications results of such studies have for the development of services and practice. This is clear. Secondly, outcome studies are needed to help ensure that the best use is made of scarce resources. There is little point in continuing to provide services in a traditional - and rather expensive - way if they are shown to have very poor outcomes for the majority of users of a service. An example mentioned earlier in this report is how too many elderly people may be placed in residential care, when better and less costly outcomes can be achieved through a redesigned, intensive community care service.

Finally, regular dissemination of the results of outcomes studies is needed. This is partially achieved through journals and meetings such as the one at Frankfurt but results of important studies in any one European country, with implications for service improvements elsewhere, are frequently unknown to social services personnel in other countries. A European digest of the results of important studies would be an invaluable contribution to overcoming the dissemination problem.

iii) Social Services Priorities

Four priorities have been selected from the discussions in Frankfurt. They are selected because of their universality, not only within Europe but also internationally.

1. **Effective responses to public expenditure constraints**

   The budgetary problems facing all governments have been referred to, together with their implications for social services and the types of responses seen across Europe. New approaches to acquiring adequate finance for social services are needed, in addition to measures mentioned elsewhere in this report. Possibilities vary between countries but include increased income from national insurance payments (eg. the German longterm care insurance scheme), taxation (difficult), and commercial sources. Countries are already studying promising approaches in other parts of the world as part of this 're-think on welfare', including social services.

2. **Strengthening the position of service users**

   There was much discussion and concern on this issue at the Frankfurt meeting, with examples of specific improvements. Given the structural weakness in the system of the typical social service user, the various interest groups need to strengthen their commitment to furthering the interests of the user in very tangible ways. Just one example has been the introduction - particularly in Germany and Austria - of direct payments to users to enable them to purchase social services, thereby exercising greater control over what is provided for them.

3. **Changing from a paternalistic to a service culture**

   This priority links closely with the previous one. The worst examples of non-service, paternalistic service cultures were found in the former communist countries of Europe. The best commercial organisations accept that the customer is King or Queen, a

recognition that informs their entire operation. Social services agencies and their staff are slowly moving in this latter direction. There are incentives for employees in many commercial enterprises to demonstrate a strong service orientation in their work. Social services similarly need incentive systems to help ensure the adoption of service cultures.

4. **Adopting an holistic approach**

Social workers - and doctors - have long been encouraged to take a holistic approach to assessing and meeting the needs of their clients/patients, and criticised when they have failed to do so. Social services organisations likewise need to adopt this holistic approach but this is not entirely within their control. For example, health and social services needs and consequent services are frequently indivisible but there are bureaucratic resistances to integrating separate services in the interests of the citizen.

Strong incentives are now needed to effect change towards more holistic services to confront social problems. Currently the European Union is showing the way with its programme to address problems of social exclusion and marginalisation. Projects are funded if they are based on a multi-agency, integrated approach instead of a fragmented, single agency strategy. The attraction of substantial funds provides a very strong incentive for separate services - including social services - to adopt a more holistic approach to social problems.

APPENDIX III

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

European Expert Meeting on "Social Services for All"

Frankfurt/Main : 14-16 October 1998

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